

Father's Eyes

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Summary: When Michael starts to have dreams about a beast stealing his son, are they mere dreams? He begins to wonder when his son acts out part of his dream.

Father's Eyes

"Are you okay, Daddy?" Michael pulled the covers over his only son, tucking them up to his chin. He tried his best to smile.

"Yeah, buddy, I'm fine." It was not really a lie for all he knew he really was fine. Looking up at his father, the six year-olds eyes were full of concern.

"Dad, are you still having bad dreams?"

Every God-forsaken night. "No, the bad dreams are all gone." As he spoke, Michael touched his son's face affectionately. With his light blonde hair and blue eyes, David looked like a miniature of his father. The resemblance was even more apparent at times like this; when even at six years old his eyes were full of compassion.

"Daddy, don't worry. Nobody could ever get me. You're way too strong! Daddy? What's wrong?" Staring down at his son, Michael's face was like a bloodless statue.

No! This can't be happening! He placed a hand on each of his David's shoulders, as if keeping him from floating away. Leaning over to the window on the other side of the bed, Michael lifted the shade looked around. Nothing.

"What did you say, son?"

"You don't have to worry about me so much. Are you crying, Daddy? Is it because of mommy? I miss her too."

"No," Michael said, trying to calm himself down, "I'm just

tired."

"But you have water in your eyes andâ€"

"Really, I'm fine buddy. Time for prayers." He ran his fingers through his son's hair. "It's your turn tonight."

Hands folded and eyes squeezed shut, the six year-old prayed with faith and sincerity, all but shouting out to God. Sitting beside him, eyes open and fighting tears, his father prayed too; moving his lips noiselesslyâ€"begging for the life of his son.

"Amen!" David yelled. Michael bent over and kissed his son on the cheek.

" 'Night Daddy."

"Goodnight, son."

As his father got up, David could tell that he was still sad. Michael clicked the light off and was about to shut the door when his the boy spoke.

"Dad?"

"Yes?"

"I love you."

His father smiled. "I love you too, buddy."

"Dad, umm, could we look at the planets tomorrow before you leave? I could get up early, and the telescope is already set up." Although he could not see David in the darkened room, Michael knew that his eyes were wide with expectation.

"Yeah, we could do that."

"Cool!"

"Now go to sleep."

"Yes, sir!"

Michael walked into the kitchen and poured himself a cup of strong, black coffee. Tonight, like every night in the three weeks since his wife's death, he would sit in a chair at the foot of David's bed and try not to sleepâ€"and especially not to dream.

* * *

>Everything else seemed to move normal, but his reactions were slow, like trying to move under water. Fear was all over, like the air itself. The bed, the table, the lampâ€"everything was menacing, everything was wrong. As he pulled the sheet up under his son's chin, he saw movement out of the corner of his eye and looked out the window. He didn't want to believe his eyes. <p>A huge beast stood right outside. Covered with jet-black hair and standing almost three meters tall, it stared back at Michael with evil, red eyes. A smile slowly spread across the horrible face, revealing long fangs stained

red with blood"and in that moment he knew that it had come for his son.<p>

He wanted to scream, to warn David, to grab him and run from the house, but his body would not move. Looking up at his dad's fearful face and oblivious to the demon outside, David smiled.

"Daddy, don't worry. Nobody could ever get me. You're way too strong!"

Staring at Michael with mocking eyes, the great beast began to laugh so hard that the house shook, but David still did not see it.

With an awful growl, the creature smashed the window and began to tear the wall down. He had to move, to grab his boy, to run, to get help, but arms and legs would not obey. Debris flew through air as the beast destroyed with wild abandon. Since only his eyes would move, Michael fixed them on his little boy, who returned his gaze with a sleepy smile.

"Daddy, don't worry. Nobody could ever get me. You're way too strong!"

I've got to move! Got to save him!

Michael watched in horror as the last of the wall gave way and the monster entered the room laughing. Huge, clawed hands snatched David from the bed, and then, almost like magic, they were gone, and Michael sat in the room alone. His son"his only son"was taken. Sitting on the pillow where David had been a moment before was a small, stuffed doll. It had blue eyes and blonde hair, but it was not his son"just a bloodless, lifeless toy.

Waking with a jump, Michael nearly fell out of his chair. Quickly turning on the light he looked around the room, the panic from his dream still fresh. David was on his bed, sleeping like a rock. Rushing over to the boy, Michael grabbed him and wept. It had been _so_ real. David spoke without opening his eyes.

"Daddy, what's wrong?"

"Nothing," Michael sobbed. "I love you, son."

"I love you too, daddy."

It was only six in the morning, but Michael was already showered and ready for work. He ran into David's room, flicked on the light and landed beside him on the bed.

"Get up, sleepy! We aren't going to see any planets when the sun comes up!"

David rolled over. "I want to sleep."

"Oh? What about the telescope?"

Finally prying his eyes open, David looked confused. "Huh?"

"The planets. You wanted to see them, remember?" This brought only more confusion. He picked the boy up and sat him on his lap. "Or were

you just trying to make daddy feel better because of the dreams?"

"Dreams? What dreams?"

"Honey, the dreams I've been having since mommy died."

David exploded out of his lap screaming. "Mommy's_ dead?" _Tears filled his eyes and he began to hyperventilate. "N-n-no! N-No! W-where's m-mommy?"

"Honey, she died three weeks ago. Maybe you're not awake yet."

"_No!_ I saw her yesterday! Yesterday! I _remember!" _Grabbing his father in desperation, he buried his face in his shoulder and wept.

Michael rubbed his back and spoke softly. "David, don't you remember the car accident? We were driving with mommy and that other car hit us?" Pulling up the leg of David's pajamas, he said, "That's where you got that big . . . hey, what happened to your bruise?"

"What bruise, Daddy?"

"What bruise? The one that covered half of your thigh!"

For some reason Michael was reminded of his dream—and he shuddered. It seemed that for a moment the child in his arms became a doll, and hideous laughter echoed in his ears. But sadly, this child was not a bloodless, lifeless toy. No, this was a real child who felt fear and pain.

David died two years later from multiple organ failure. Nobody knew what caused his illness, or the reason his body rejected seemingly compatible replacements. Nobody, that is, except the beast. Unable to cope with the loss of his son, Michael became an alcoholic. Three years to the day after his son's passing he died of alcohol poisoning and was buried in the plot next to his wife.

* * *

>Like human statues, the two Spartans stood guard outside the makeshift base. At fourteen years old, they were nearly done with their training. A week before they had received their MJOLNIR armor, and now they were itching to do something real. Presently, however, the two of them were stuck on guard duty—and that could last for hours. Strictly speaking, they weren't supposed to chat, but their new armor allowed them to talk all they wanted without Mendez hearing a word. At least, they _hoped_ he didn't.

"Raul?"

"Yeah?"

"Do you remember your parents?"

The big Spartan thought it over a minute. "I remember my mom. Not her face, just the feeling of her being around. How about you,

David?"

"I remember my dad. My mom died just before I was conscripted, and I remember him grieving. Also," David's voice seemed to change a little, "he was having bad dreams. That's how I remember his face; the last night I was at home, he was bothered by the dreams."

Raul was impressed. "You remember your last night? I hardly remember anything."

"After my mom died he would sleep on a chair in my room." For some reason a lump started to form in his throat as David thought of his dad. "You knowâ€" " he took a deep breath to keep from crying. "I was all he had after my mom died. He wouldâ€" " his voice almost broke again, "would go with me everywhere. I remember him being so scared of losing me. I remember we used to look at planets throughâ€" "

"Yeah?"

After taking several deep breaths, David tried to continue, but he could no longer force down the emotion. "Raul," he said, his voice breaking.

"Yeah?"

"You won't tell anyone if I cry, will you?" Beneath his helmet, tears streamed down his face.

"No, your secret will be safe with me."

"Raul, do you think that . . . that our parents knew that we were taken. I mean, I think it would have killed my dad."

"We were replaced with exact clones. I'm sure that your dad never knew the difference."

For some reason, that made David even sadder. "He was going through the worst time of his life when I was taken. It was just the two of us. I hope he's okay. I miss him, Raul. I really miss him. I was supposed toâ€" " David took a slow, deep breath. "Supposed to get up early and look at the planets with him."

"Yeah, you already said that. How in the heck do you remember that crap?"

"Probably my mom's death. Emotionally traumatic experiences can frame memories for decades. Yeah, I can still see his face. Well, wherever he is, he's probably happy."

"I'm sure he is, David. Now let's shut up and get to business. I'm sure Mendez has something real cute planned for us."

"Yup, he always does."

C.T. Clown

End
file.